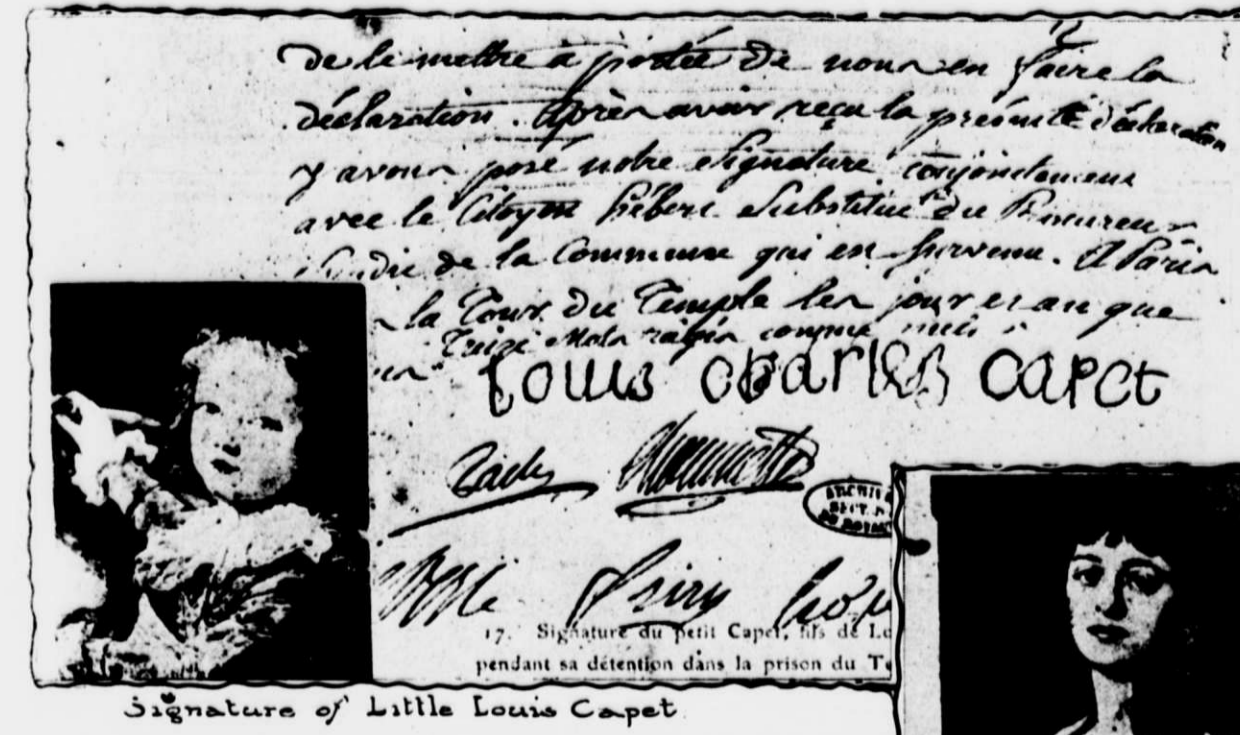


LAST WORDS OF FAMOUS FRENCH MEN AND WOMEN



Signature of Little Louis Capet

Wonderful Collection of Autographs and Historic Documents Made Available to the Public After More Than a Century.

THE office of the National French Archives in Paris contains a medieval looking box called "Armoire de fer." A translation of "Armoire de fer" would be "The Iron Safe" but it stands to a safe in the same relation as one of Charlemagne's Barons would stand to a khaki clad trooper.

That huge and romantic piece of furniture holds on its shelves an extraordinary collection of autographs from the days of the Revolution and of the First Empire. Until recently none but duly registered and vouched for students of history have been able to peruse and copy the invaluable documents included in that collection. Now the ban has been removed and an enterprising manufacturer of postal cards has photographed the most important among those manuscripts. For the sum of two sous collectors will be able to revise with the help of original evidence the historical notions imparted to them in their school years.

Curiously enough the autograph which first attracts the attention in that collection is a huge scrawl running across the bottom of a sheet from margin to margin. It is so large and effixed to so many documents that the casual visitor forms an exaggerated opinion of the part played in French history by a certain Louis Charles Capet.

"Le Citoyen Louis Charles Capet," as he is designated in several documents, was merely Louis XVI's son, the poor seven-year-old child who, frightened to death, let any one wearing a uniform guide his hand while he signed infamous documents impeaching his father's honesty and the honor of his mother out of every woman in the royal family. Mary Antoinette devoted the greater part of the last letter she wrote to begging forgiveness for her son from Mme. Elizabeth.

This letter, one of the most pathetic in the collection, is dated October 16 at 4:30 A. M. Several black stains show where her tears fell. Those tears, however, were only a distracted mother's tears, not a frightened woman's tears.

The dainty, empty headed doll who had been the incompetent life mate of the undignified Louis XVI. met her death very bravely. In her last sleepless vigil she demanded from her jailer some substantial food so as not to yield to physical weakness. Then she wrote a long letter asking Mme. Elizabeth to care for her children.

Even as she was writing the following words, "They will probably bring me a priest; but I swear that I will not speak a single word with him and will treat him as an absolute stranger," she was interrupted. The jailer was bringing a priest. And she never finished the letter. A few hours afterward her head rolled into the basket and was shown to the people.

Another note she wrote a few days before her execution flatters strongly of romantic adventures. After several wonderful escapes from jail the faithful royalist, the Chevalier de Rougemont, dared to present himself at the Conciergerie. His desperate audacity had its reward; he was allowed to see the Queen. After a few minutes of conversation on the subject of her children he respectfully offered her a flower, which contained a note written on tissue paper.

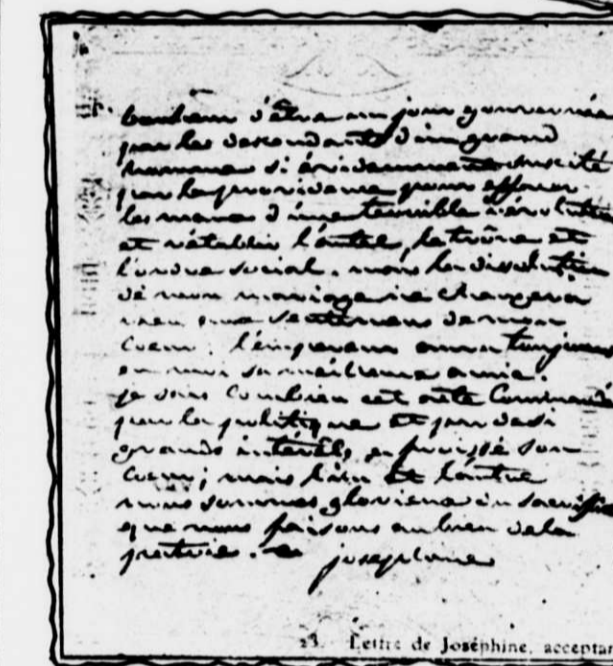
On the note, to organize her rescue, Marie Antoinette found the note and tried to answer it by piercing holes in one of her curl papers with a hairpin. Her note read: "I am closely watched; I don't speak to anybody. I trust you, I will come."

One of the keepers seized the note and Rougemont's plans failed. Louis XVI's last note leaves on the reader an impression decidedly less favorable than the brave words written by Marie Antoinette in her terrible vigil. He pleads for a delay in his execution. He wishes to prepare himself fitly to meet his Maker and adds a few beautiful sentences intended for publication. The answer to this rather weak letter is given in the next document, which reads:

"At 10:20 Louis Capet arrived at the foot of the scaffold and descended from the tumbrel. At 10:22 he mounted the

steps of the scaffold, was immediately beheaded and his head shown to the people."

Another dramatic document is a note by Robespierre which he was writing at his table in the Comité Révolutionnaire when the report of a shot rang and the tyrant fell with his lower jaw broken. A young officer of the gendarmes had shot him. No one feared him any longer; he was bound, tried summarily without being given any medical help and sent to the guillotine unconscious and bleeding.



Note by Empress Josephine Accepting Divorce.

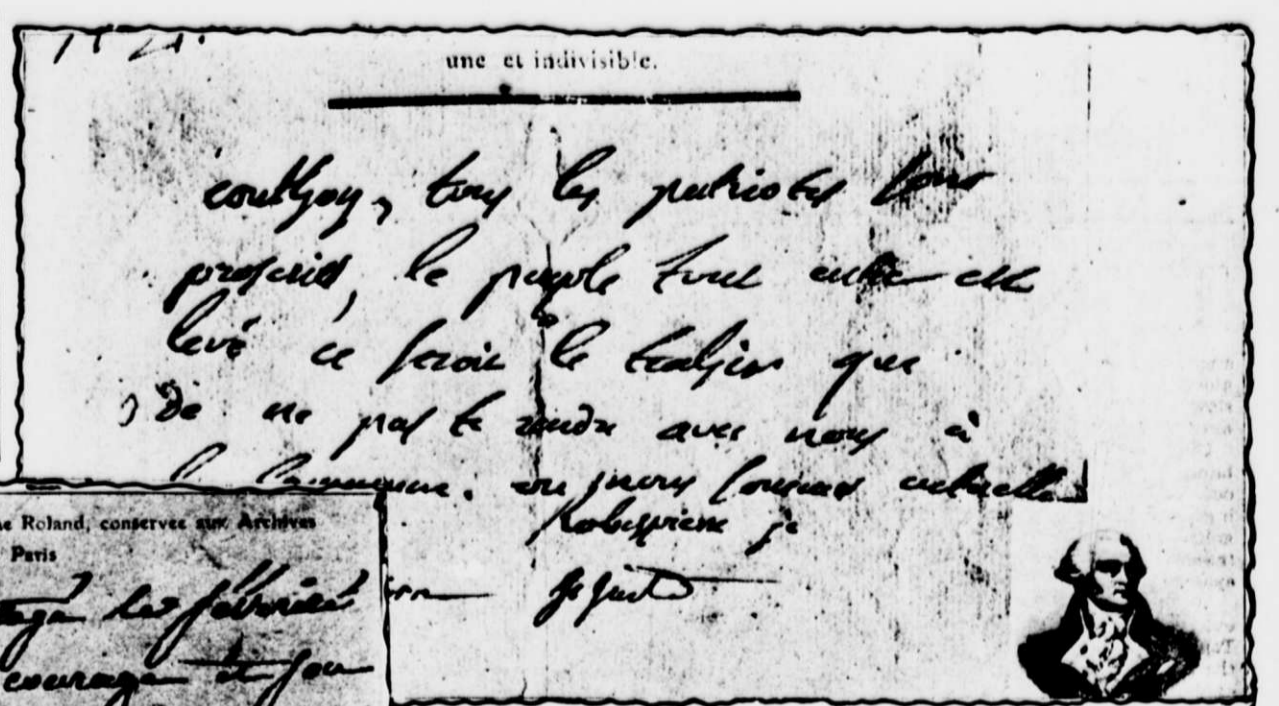
Other women of the Revolution be laid at rest on the banks of the Seine amidst the people of France whom I have loved so much."

Both wishes have been fulfilled. He sleeps in the vault of the Invalides and every school boy memorizes this well sounding sentence.

Josephine, too, had an eye for his

posterity rather than to their actual correspondents. Mme. Roland indulged in magnificent phrases of the most post-prandial type: Charlotte Corday, after stabbing Marat on July 13, 1793, wrote a letter to her father in which grammatical errors alternate with quotations from Corneille's tragedies.

Napoleon's last words are also tainted with an ill concealed desire to invade the text books of the future generation. He interrupts a list of bequests to promiscuous heirs with this beautiful statement: "I desire that my ashes



Robespierre's Note Written a Few Minutes Before He Was Shot.

The Note Written by Marie Antoinette Just Before Her Execution, the Signature of the Ill Fated Dauphin and Other Relics.

torical effects when she wrote her magnanimous acceptance of the divorce granted to herself by Napoleon. And in

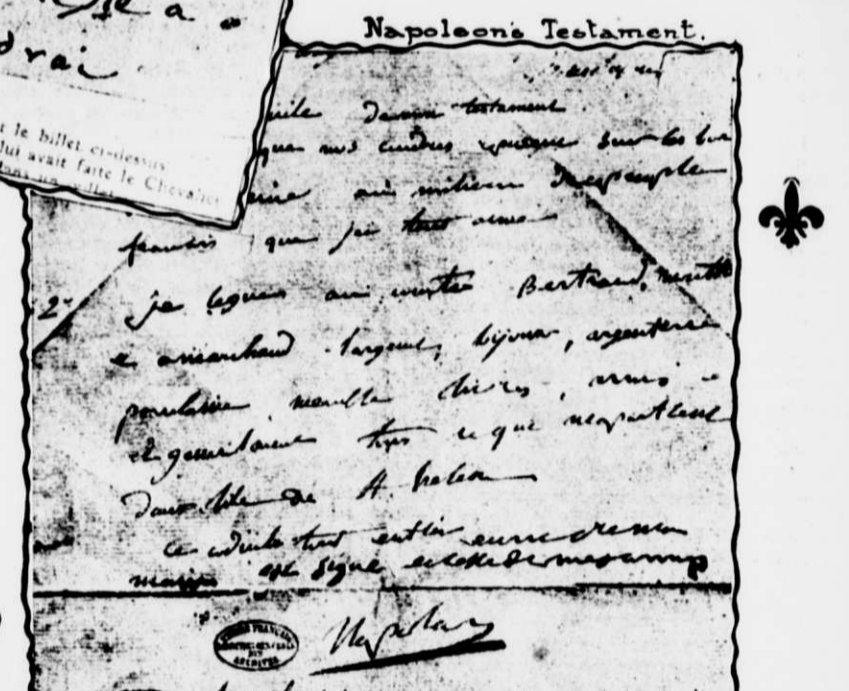
spite of all she never forgave him.

Many other priceless documents will thus be accessible to students, letters from Charlemagne written on parchment 1,200 years ago, notes convicting dear old Voltaire of having been a shameless usurer, meek supplication from Bonaparte, deserter and down and out, begging his superiors to take him back; Louis XI's last note written with a hand that shook with the fear of hell fire, a gallant epistle of Francis I.

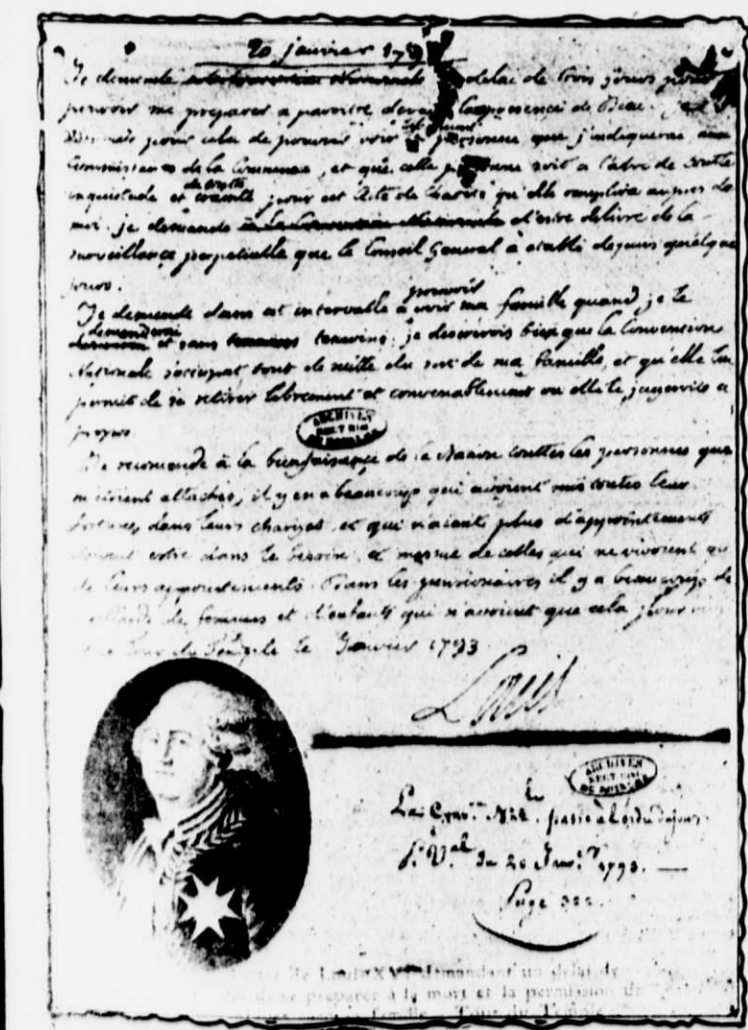
The pathetic note is represented here, and there, for instance, by those touching lines of Louise de la Vallière, Louis XIV's favorite, who forsook a court life to withdraw into the solitude of a convent. And on a cold March day in 1707 she had to beg some one to send a few blankets and a few loaves of bread for her little sisters, who were freezing and starving.



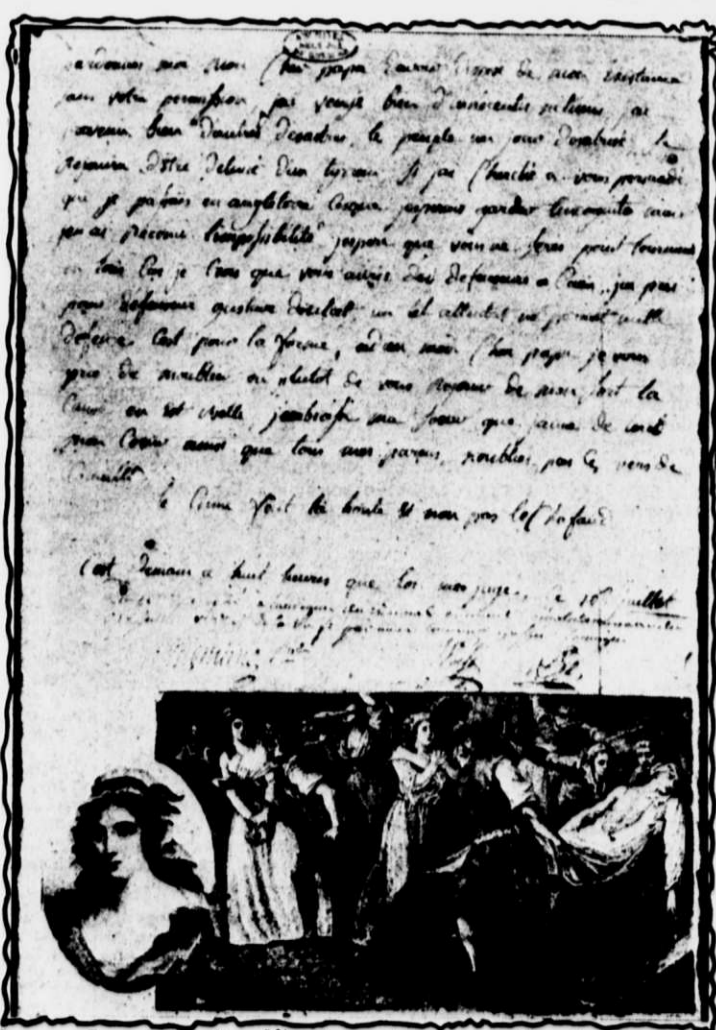
Marie Antoinette's Last Note Written on Curling Paper with Hair Pin



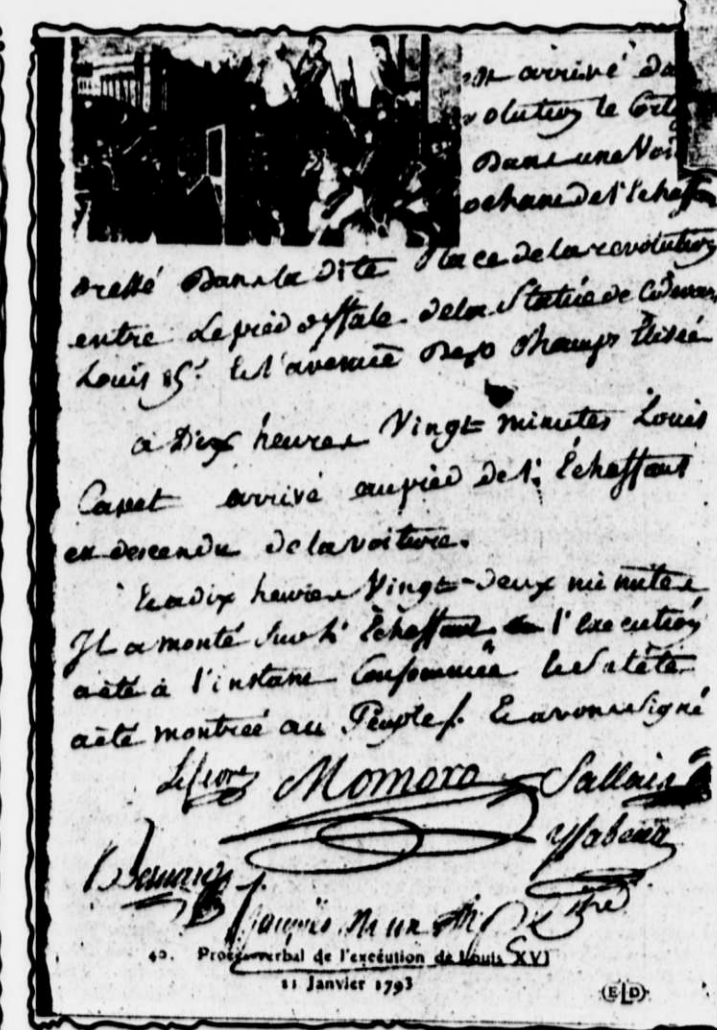
Napoleon's Testament.



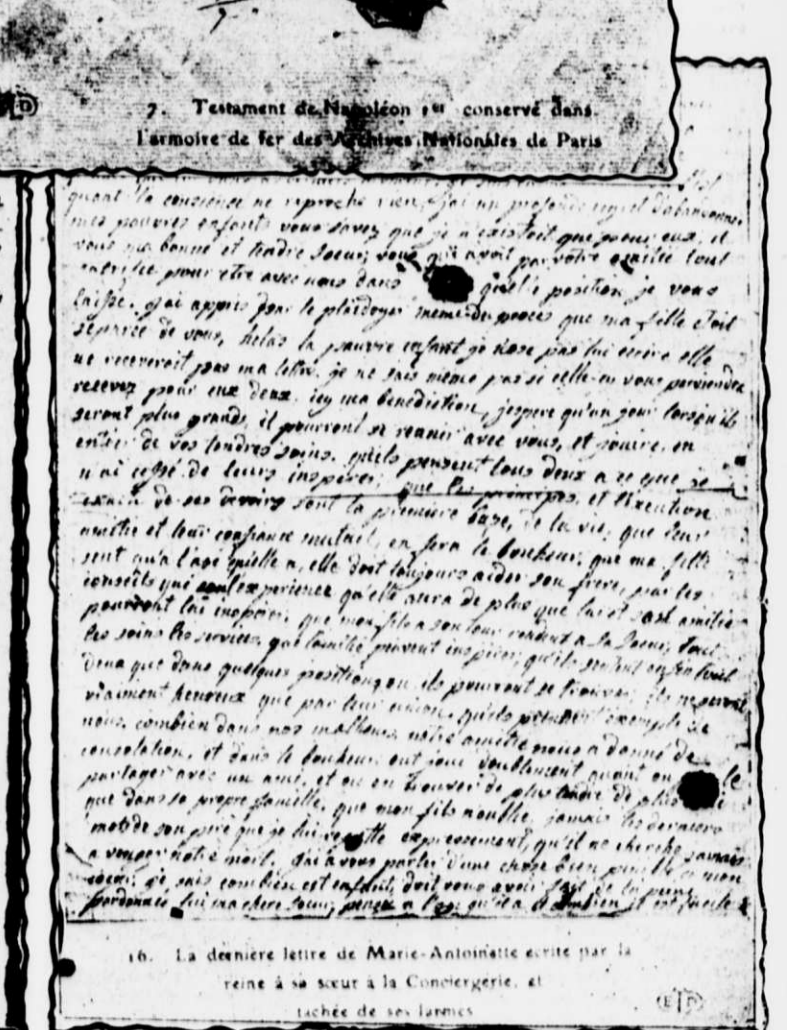
Louis XVI's Note Asking for Permission to See His Family



Last Notes Written by Charlotte Corday



Official Report on Louis XVI's Execution.



Marie Antoinette's Last Letter.